

"International development" or "development" or "the development of underdeveloped nations" or any one of many other phrases used to connote the development process conjures private images for each of us; images that have a close similarity, even if not an identity in sharpness of focus or breadth of vision or depth of perception. Yet for all this similarity, a concept of development is difficult to define. It embraces a totality of human behaviour within and between nations, and the relation of man's activity to his environment; it is a static snapshot and a dynamic moving picture; it is concurrently a wide-angled sweep of what is, and a telephoto examination of what might be and what should be. To be asked to encompass what is entailed in these manifold pictures in a short and spritely précis is truly a task of the gods.

*deleted* ~~Nevertheless, our genial host Michael Lubbock, whom one can only regard as an emissary of the gods, if not one himself, has set this task for me. Like all weak mortals when confronted by lordly messages, I agreed to attempt to comply. My prose will be ponderous and no one, not even the gods, will be happy with the results. I only ask you to bear with me with patience.~~

As a first approximation, development is usually regarded as the sustained rise in a nation's gross national product per capita. Because this measure of a country's progress is conceptually easy to define and quantify, it has become the major device for classifying countries and for evaluating the results of their development efforts.

It is a useful measure for economists because by using relatively simple models they can assess the consequences of different courses of action directed toward sustaining or accelerating national output growth rates. As the productive labor in most less-developed countries is engaged in the traditional pursuits of an agrarian economy the development theorist and practitioner gives major attention to the elaboration of the industrial capital and economic infrastructure of a nation -- to the investment in new plants and equipment for the production of non-traditional products; to the imparting of new skills and a new sense of discipline to the labor force; to the creation of improved facilities for transportation and communication; to the founding and elaboration of the many institutions of education, public administration, research, etc. -- the features that provide the basis of modern economic life.

The complexities of the process surrounding the enhancement of the rate of growth of the gross national product have been the essence of development theory and practice during the past two decades. Added to them now, however, is a growing recognition that enlarging gross national product is not synonymous with the improvement in the well-being of all a nation's citizenry. There are classic examples of countries whose GNP growth rate has been of a high order, but where the bulk of the increase has been captured by only a small proportion of each national population. There is evidence in some of these countries that over time a substantial number of the population have found their lot worsened despite the rise in average GNP. Concern for this phenomenon is embraced in the concept of 'distributive justice' and it shifts the focus of attention from the single measure of gross national product per capita to the issues surrounding

the distribution of this product among the total population of the nation. Little can be said at present about the implications for the course of development of a search for the dual goals of distributive justice and a rising total product. Little research has been done on the problems of securing a wider distribution of the benefits of development, or on the relation between the attainment of a better distribution as it might interact with the pursuit of a larger aggregate of goods and services.

The issues surrounding the enhancement of gross national product accompanied by distributive justice add immensely to the space that must be encompassed by our view of development. In the industrial field one has to take careful account of how much employment is generated by the introduction of new technologies. It is no longer sufficient to argue the importance of a high rate of return to an investment in a new plant. This argument must now be framed in a way that examines the trade-off between a rate of return to capital and the generation of employment opportunities, particularly opportunities that are suited to the skills of the mass labor force. <sup>I/</sup> Likewise the selection of the

---

<sup>I/</sup> Lord Ritchie-Calder tells of crossing a bridge in Scotland during the depression years of the 30's and coming upon two men observing powerful machines moving earth to build a new approach road. He reports that one onlooker said to the other, "If they did it with wheelbarrows they could employ 1,000 men." to which the other responded, "Or a million men with teaspoons." Considerations of productivity may well favour using heavy machinery over wheelbarrows or teaspoons. Considerations of distributive justice, however, may favour teaspoons. The introduction of such considerations to the development equation in the decade hence will not be the idle speculation of an onlooker.

kind of health care available for the population of a nation must be carefully balanced between health care at a relatively low level of sophistication widely available throughout the rural and urban areas, probably in small clinics manned by personnel who have received rudimentary medical training and health services which stress elaborately equipped modern hospitals staffed by few, but highly trained medical personnel capable of providing very sophisticated medical care to only a small number of the upper elite of the society. Similar parallels could be drawn for education, the conduct of research, the building of a nation's economic infrastructure, and so on. Once the question of distributive justice is addressed, attention suddenly becomes focused not just on the problems of increasing GNP but also on the qualitative nature of the content of the goods and services counted as part of that figure and the distribution of these among the nation's population.

These issues are not new to developed countries. They have long been the underlying substance of our political debates and they are made manifest in political platforms, welfare legislation, present concerns over poverty, etc. And, they are not completely new to debates on development. They are, in one form or another, alluded to in most of the standard development literature. They come to the fore now because they have been substantially neglected and ignored in the discussions and actions of the past twenty years of development effort.

They are the issues that will be paramount in the decade of the 70's. And they set the view of development for the International Development Research Centre.

W. David Hopper  
International Development Research Centre

September 29, 1971